"I miss hanging around with my friends," answered Antron.

"People you meet here, these are associates. You can't call them your friends, we're only here for about two weeks," said K-Dog.

The average stay is three weeks. During that time, the young people receive counseling. The purpose of the program, said director George Johnson, is not to separate families but to bring them together.

"We include the family in the process," he said.

Sixteen teenagers, ages 12 to 17, can stay in the house at one time, but Johnson said that they won't turn anyone away. They can sleep on the couch or they'll make other arrangements. They have to get permission to go out, to visit family.

"When I first came here, it seemed OK because it was much better than where I was before," said Tupac. "But when you get used to it, it's really boring. It sucks."

"It's an atmosphere you're not used to," said K-Dog. "You can't call it home. It's just a place to be, a place to sleep, a place to eat."

"I feel safe," said Antron.

Most of them go to school and have a lot of ambitions for when they leave Sasha Bruce. Tupac, who attends the Duke Ellington School for the Arts, said he plans to make money the day after he leaves and start his own recording studio and become a rap artist.

"I don't plan to hustle, I don't plan to rob nobody, but if it comes down to I need it, I will do it," he said.

In 10 years, he sees himself living in a small town. Antron said he will still be trying to finish school and K-Dog said,

"I'll have my degree in what I want to have it in and I'll be living phat."

Most people think that homeless kids or runaways are bad, they don't know how to read and they can't accomplish anything. But these teens all have something that they want to do when they leave the shelter. They all were very intelligent.

"I believe that when young people come in this program, they really want to have something different happen in their family situation," said Johnson. "They want a change in their life to make their lives better."

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BZA
Case No. 16622
Exhibit No. 35

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16622
EXHIBIT NO.35

Finding Hope for the Homeless

By Dan Freilich, 15 and David Morgan, 13
Children's Express Washington, D.C. Bureau (August 1999)

For kids that are homeless in Washington, D.C., sleeping on park benches and under bridges is not their only alternative. The Sasha Bruce homeless shelter is a place where kids can turn when they have nowhere else to go.

It's comfortable, relaxing and in a quiet part of town. It was kind of rundown looking. The furniture was pretty old and a little shaggy, but not uncomfortable. Children's Express interviewed three residents, who all used different names, in the living room. They didn't look homeless, with shaggy clothes or anything like that. If you saw them in a mall, you wouldn't think they were homeless – a label most of them don't like anyway.

"We're not really homeless, like people sleeping on the street," said K-Dog, a 17-year-old girl. "We just got put out or something. This is a two-week period. I just want to make it clear that I've never lived on the street."

"I still have a home to go to," said Antron, a 14-year-old boy who was spending his first day at Sasha Bruce.

"I have lived on the street," said another boy, Tupac, 17. "I have slept on benches. It makes you feel disgusted because you know it's not where you're supposed to be. You're supposed to be at home with your family."

He describes homelessness as being frustrating. "Extremely frustrating, makes you do things that you never thought you would ever do," he said. "Some people say they'll never sell drugs, but you get homeless, I bet you sell everything out there. Some people turn to prostitution, some turn to drugs, some turn to robbery, to crack.

"Some get out there and the next day they have a job. I was one of the unfortunate ones. When I got out there, the next day I was robbing people."

Tupac said he was a "crack baby" whose family lost interest in him when his mother died. He went to his father's house, but they didn't get along.

"It was just a matter of time before I was out of his house, too," he said.

K-Dog and Antron didn't say how they became homeless, but they did say what they missed by being at Sasha Bruce.

"I miss having a place that I can call my own," said K-Dog.

IFC HOME
EFSD MAIN
EMERGENCY FOOD
SOUP KITCHENS
SHELTERS
MEDICAL SHELTERS
DAY SHELTERS
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Shelters - D.C.

NorthEast
NorthWest
SouthEast
SouthWest

NorthEast

BOYS TOWN OF WASHINGTON

4801 Sargent Road, NE, Washington, DC 20017

Contact: (202) 832-7343

Hours: 24 hours

Population: 8-18 boys and girls

Bed Capacity: 16

Services: Long term residential, emergency shelter, foster care, parents training.

Specialized Services: Wheelchair accessible

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

ST. MARTIN'S HOUSE FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN

116 T Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002

Contact: Ms. Laura Jackson

Hours: 24 hours

Bed Capacity: 11 families

Population: Pregnant and post-partum women in recovery from drug addiction and their children.

Services: Case management; parent education; addictions counseling; NA meetings; food; shelter; clothing; referrals for health care, legal assistance, day care, education, and jobs.

Restrictions: Woman must have completed in-patient drug treatment.

HOUSE OF RUTH MADISON EMERGENCY SHELTER

651 10th Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002

Contact: 24 hr. domestic violence hotline (202) 347-2777; Phone (202) 547-2600; Fax (202) 547-9349.

Hours: Daily intake at 4:30pm

Bed Capacity: 74

Population: Single adult women.

Services: Comprehensive social services.

Restrictions: Referrals not required.

MARY HOUSE

4303 13th St., NE, Washington, DC 20017

Contact: (202) 635-9025

Bed Capacity: 35 families

Hours: 7 days a week, 9am to 5pm

Population: Families, homeless, primarily single mothers with young children.

Services: Shelter, transitional housing, long-term

housing, outreach services including food, clothing, prenatal advocacy, trauma housing for Bosnian families.

Specialized Services: Bilingual staff (Spanish/Bosnian/English)

Restrictions: Referrals only.

MY SISTER'S PLACE

P.O. Box 29596, Washington, DC 20017

Contact: Staff or Volunteer, (202) 529-5261; Hotline, (202) 529-5991

Hours: Daily, 24 hours

Bed Capacity: 24

Population: Battered women and their children (boys under age 12) in DC.

Services: Shelter, 24 hour hotline, advocacy services, hearing impaired (volunteers), legal and job assistance, crisis intervention, speaker's bureau, transitional housing, and support groups for battered women.

Specialized Services: Bilingual (Spanish/English) staff; wheelchair accessible.

Restrictions: Referrals not required.

Most services available only to shelter residents or on hotline. Support groups open to all. Many Volunteer Opportunities.

SASHA BRUCE HOUSE

1022 Maryland Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20002